

Papers of:
Dean Acheson

✓ State Department Advisory
Pickett, Judge, John C.

November 1, 1962

Dear Judge:

Thank you for the Reston article. I had missed it altogether. The President consulted both Bob Lovett and me while he made his decision on the course to follow. His choice of me to go abroad was, I assume, due to the fact that both General De Gaulle and the Chancellor, as well as the members of the NATO Council, know me and have some confidence in me.

As you say, we would be better off if the Cuban situation were completely cleaned up now. The real problem is not how to get into Cuba, but how to get out -- how to accomplish the complete clean-up. The refugees are a scrubby lot and dislike one another about as much as they dislike Castro. There are fifty thousand well armed and trained fighting men on the island and another hundred and twenty-five thousand militia. They could easily be defeated and the cities taken over. But the French found in Algeria that half a million men could not stamp out guerrilla fighting in the hills, which continually erupted into the cities. In time, we could do it, as we did in the Philippines and in Korea, but the effort might be too costly. What we need most now is a good government-in-exile for Cuba.

Nevertheless, if the nuclear weapons and the IL 28s don't come out, we shall doubtless have to go in and get them out. Perhaps the Castro brothers might not survive this effort.

With kind regards to you and Mrs. Pickett,

Sincerely yours,

The Honorable
John C. Pickett,
Circuit Judge,
United States Court of Appeals,
Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Papers of:
Dean Acheson

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UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
TENTH CIRCUIT

Cheyenne, Wyoming
October 29, 1962

Honorable Dean Acheson
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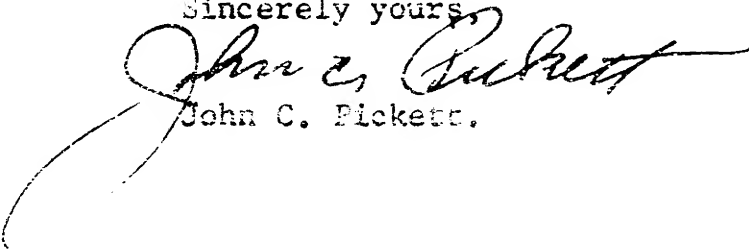
Dear Mr. Acheson:

Thanks for your letter of October 26th. I am enclosing the Reston article to which I referred. I shall look forward to hearing the story of the present crisis as you have seen it develop.

The situation seems to be considerably changed this morning. Although the risk may be rather great, I have had a feeling that in the end we would be better off if the Cuban situation were completely cleaned up at this time while we have the almost unanimous support of the people of the United States and also, I think, world opinion. If the missile threat is removed from Cuba, it seems to me that a continuation of the Castro government furnishes a base for Communist propaganda and activity throughout the Latin-American countries. It does not seem to me that the elimination of war threats from Cuba accomplishes very much as I have always been of the opinion that the Russians are not going to fight, and probably are not in a position to carry on an all-out war. I feel reasonably certain that something drastic must be done in Cuba, even after this present flareup has been worked out, or the Russians will increase their activities in Central and South America, as well as Cuba.

With personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,


John C. Pickett.

Tough Orders Backstop Decision for Confrontation With Russians

By JAMES RESTON

(C) 1962, N. Y. Times News Service

WASHINGTON—The official orders behind President Kennedy's speech are just as tough as the speech itself. On the highest authority, it can be said that they include:

Ships carrying additional offensive weapons to Cuba must either turn back, or submit to search and seizure or fight. If they try to run the blockade, a warning shot will be fired across their bows; if they still do not submit, they will be attacked.

Even this will not satisfy the new policy as announced by Kennedy Monday night. Not only must additional offensive missiles be stopped, but those already in Cuba must be dismantled, or the United States will take whatever additional action necessary, beginning with a much more rigorous blockade of such things as Cuba's essential oil supplies, to force compliance.

If this leads to Soviet retaliation, such as a counter-blockade of Berlin, the U.S. is prepared to risk a major war to defend its present position in the former German capital.

"Let no one doubt," the president said Monday, "that this is a difficult and dangerous effort on which we have set out." And that is generally regarded here as the major understatement of the speech.

For the president has consistently decided on a major confrontation, not with Cuba, but

with the Soviet Union. He has brought the cold war to a head by offering the U.S.S.R. a choice of getting its offensive nuclear weapons out of this hemisphere or fighting.

This is the policy Dean G. Acheson, secretary of state under President Truman, has been urging on the Kennedy Administration ever since Nikita Khrushchev began pressing his Berlin ultimatum on the allies. And it is significant that, during the urgent and secret consultations that went on here over the weekend, it was Acheson who was summoned to the White House and sent to Paris to inform the North Atlantic Treaty Council of the president's decision.

The test of the president's speech will come fairly soon, a number of ships under the control of the Soviet bloc are now on route to Cuba. Intelligence reports say that the captains of these ships are under orders not to permit any surveillance of their cargoes by the U.S.

Accordingly, it is the hope of the administration that, after Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy F. Dobrynin's call at the State Department Monday night, during which the new U.S. policy was defined, the Soviet Union will issue new orders to those captains.

BAD FAITH CHARGED

If no new orders are issued, then the ships will be intercepted by vessels of the growing U.S. naval forces around Cuba.

Kennedy's talk with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko Thursday had an important bearing on the president's decision that the U.S.S.R. was acting in bad faith and therefore had to be confronted with a stern policy.

At the end of the previous week, U.S. reconnaissance planes had not been able to carry out their observation missions over Cuba because of hurricane Ella. However, reports from other U.S. sources had been coming in about the arrival not only of medium-range missiles (range 1,620 to 1,380 miles) but of intermediate range missiles (2,200 miles).

By Sunday, Oct. 14, however, Air Force planes were able to survey Cuba again. They brought back confirmation of the reports of the medium and intermediate missiles. They are understood to have spotted at a site in west Cuba medium range missiles of what are described as the field type, which do not require concrete emplacements but which can be moved from one position to another.

These were not, as had previously been reported by Sen. Kenneth Keating (R) of New York merely the sites for missiles but the actual missiles themselves. They also photographed IL-28 bombers and several MIG-21 fighters. Previous intelligence reports had merely noted the presence of older MIG 15s and MIG 17s.

Accordingly, in the last few days, every conceivable retaliatory measure by the Soviet Union has been analyzed. These have included a possible attack on the U.S. base at Guantanamo Bay.

These reports were verified, according to official sources, and the photographs developed on Monday night, Oct. 15 and presented to Kennedy for the first time on Tuesday morning.

WEAPONS HELD DEFENSIVE

Yet when Gromyko came to the White House two days later, as the president said in his speech Monday night, he (Gromyko) insisted that the weapons in Cuba were purely defensive and the Soviet technicians there "would never become involved in rendering assistance" in offensive weapons.

The information on which this government is acting is not only different from this, but U.S. intelligence indicates that all Cubans have been removed from the missile sites and replaced by Russians and that all the IL-28 Soviet bombers are under the command of Soviet fliers.

There is no inclination here to minimize the seriousness of the situation that may follow the policy announced by the president. It is realized that he has in effect asked the Soviet Union to abandon its offensive support of the Castro regime, and that this, if accepted by Moscow, will be a serious challenge to the Soviet Union's prestige and a disastrous blow to Castro.

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Accordingly, its civilian personnel have been evacuated and its military personnel strengthened.

A counter-blockade by the Soviets on U.S. supplies to the NATO bases in Italy and Turkey have also been considered, but the feeling here is that they are now self-sufficient to a point where they will not need supplies for a considerable time.

BERLIN TREATY SEEN

That the new Cuban policy may lead to an early Soviet peace treaty with the East German regime has also been taken into account, but it has been taken for granted that this would probably come before the end of the year anyway.

This by no means disposes of all the other places where the Soviet Union could open a new front—Iran, Thailand and Vietnam, to mention only three, but the decision here was that the risk of permitting the Soviet buildup to continue in Cuba was greater than the risk of retaliation elsewhere.

Tough as is the Kennedy response to the Soviet's offensive missiles, the administration is still hoping to avoid a military clash. An invasion of Cuba was considered and rejected. This, it is said, is at least partly because the build-up of Soviet military technicians is now so great that it could not be carried out without a direct clash between U.S. and Soviet troops in Cuba.

The same thing applies to another possible course of action—direct bombing of the Soviet missiles, supply dumps and planes in Cuba.

Accordingly, what the administration calls a quarantine and what everybody else here calls a blockade was chosen, beginning with a decision, not to halt the supply of oil, foods and other things necessary to the civilian life of the island, but only of offensive weapons.

The really hard question, however, is how those missiles and missile sites now in place and in construction are to be dismantled if the Cubans and the Soviets do not submit to the president's demands.

SEE MAJOR APPROVAL

The administration is confident that two-thirds of the members of the Organization of American States will approve the U.S. decision. There is confidence here that the evidence of those longer range Soviet missiles in Cuba, capable of hitting a large part of South America, will pull the republics of the hemisphere together and provide the support of the Rio treaty for Kennedy's policy.

There is less confidence that the U.N. General Assembly will go along with the U.S. resolution, which will call on the U.N. to supervise the dismantling of the Soviet missiles and bases.

However, with or without the

support of the U.N. and the O.A.S., this is not likely to get the Castro regime and the Soviets to submit. Then the question will arise whether an extended blockade of the civilian commerce of Cuba can achieve the U.S. objective.

If not, Washington will still be confronted by the prospect of taking direct military action against these missiles, and this could eventually raise the dangerous prospect Washington has tried since the beginning of the cold war to avoid, namely attacking bases manned by Soviet forces.

Kennedy's decision to cancel all remaining political engagements for the rest of the congressional election campaign indicates the swift change of mood in the administration.

INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

From now on the focus will be on the international scene, for it is realized here that the Soviet government has committed itself to support Cuba, and while the U.S. does not regard its "quarantine" as an "act of war" there is the chance that the Soviet Union and Cuba may so regard it.

It is recalled here, for example, that on Sept. 11 of this year, the Soviet Union issued a statement which said, among other things:

"The Soviet government would like to draw attention to the fact that one cannot now attack

Cuba and expect that the aggressor will be free from punishment for this attack. If this attack is made, this will be the beginning of the unleashing of war.

"How are the preparations for aggression against Cuba being motivated? By saying that Soviet merchant ships carry cargoes to Cuba, and the U.S. considers them to be military cargoes. But this is a purely formal matter of the status which sends those cargoes—and those which buy and receive them."

OPPOSITE VIEWPOINT

This, of course, is precisely the opposite of Kennedy's estimate of the situation. He not only asserted the opposite but charged the Soviet Union with bad faith and put Moscow on notice that any nuclear attack on the U.S. from Cuba would be regarded as an attack on the Soviet Union "requiring a full retaliatory response against the Soviet Union."

Thus, the issue has been drawn so far as this hemisphere is concerned. In the 17 years of the cold war, Moscow has committed itself to action to get the American missiles out of Turkey. It has protested bitterly about these bases close to the Soviet border, but it has held back from the ultimate commitment now taken by the U.S. against the Soviet bases in Cuba.